

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted gaming session when a jackpot over a threshold amount is won, the method comprising the steps of:

- collecting player-related information;
- storing the player-related information;
- allowing the player to participate in a gaming session substantially uninterrupted;
- recording jackpot-related information whenever a jackpot greater than a threshold amount is won;
- crediting winnings to the player; and
- generating a statement referencing the recorded jackpot-related information and stored player-related information after the player is done playing.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the allowing step comprises the step of enabling a pre-programmed gaming machine to play an uninterrupted session, even if a reportable jackpot is won.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the enabling step comprises the steps of:

- inserting an agent card;
- selecting uninterrupted play from a menu screen on a display; and
- inserting a player card.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the allowing step comprises the step of providing the player with physical access to a game of chance dedicated to uninterrupted play.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein the collecting step further comprises the step of:

examining documents which qualify as proof of the player's identity.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the collecting step further comprises the step of:

obtaining tax related information about the player.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the obtaining step further comprises the step of:

looking at a document selected from the group consisting of the player's driver's license, the player's social security card, and the player's voter registration card.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the tax related information comprises the name, address, and tax identification number of the player.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of reporting jackpot-related information and player-related information to a taxing authority.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of providing the player with a statement referencing jackpot-related information after the player is done playing.

11. An interactive network linking at least one gaming machine and a central control unit for allowing uninterrupted play, the network comprising:

a central storage unit in electronic communication with the central control unit, the central storage unit having stored player-related information adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

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at least one gaming machine in communication with the central control unit, the at least one gaming machine being arranged to lock up whenever a jackpot greater than a threshold amount is won, the at least one gaming machine sending signals representing jackpot-related information to the central control unit, and the jackpot-related information being adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

the central control unit automatically returning signals to the at least one gaming machine when jackpot-related information is recorded, the returned signals causing the at least one gaming machine to unlock; and

a reporting unit in communication with the central control unit, the reporting unit capable of producing statements referencing player-related information and jackpot-related information.

12. The network of claim 11 wherein the central control unit is a computer.

13. The network of claim 11 wherein the player-related information includes a name, an address, and a tax identification number of a player.

14. The network of claim 11 wherein the reporting unit comprises a printer for printing jackpot-related and player-related information in a form required by a taxing authority.

15. The network of claim 11 wherein the at least one gaming machine includes a microprocessor programmed with a protocol for uninterrupted play.

16. The network of claim 15 further comprising a networking computer connected to a plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit, the networking computer facilitating electronic communication between the plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit.

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17. The network of claim 15 further comprising a player card encoder, wherein each of the at least one gaming machines is in electronic communication with a card reader capable of reading information encoded on a player card.

18. The network of claim 17 wherein the at least one gaming machine is in communication with a keypad.

19. The network of claim 18 wherein the protocol for uninterrupted play is capable of being activated by an enabling event.

20. The network of claim 19 wherein the enabling event includes insertion of an agent card into the card reader, selection of uninterrupted play using the keypad, and insertion of a player card into the card reader.

21. The network of claim 20 wherein the protocol for uninterrupted play is deactivated by removal of the player card from the card reader.

22. The network of claim 15 wherein physical access is limited to the at least one gaming machine.

23. A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having a protocol stored thereon, wherein said protocol comprises machine readable code to enable a computer network to allow for an uninterrupted play session on a gaming machine, even when a reportable jackpot is won, wherein the machine readable code comprises:

code to enable a central storage computer to store player-related information;

code to enable a gaming machine to enter an uninterrupted play session in response to a user input;

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code to enable a gaming machine to send signals representing jackpot-related information to the central storage computer when a reportable jackpot is won;

code to enable the central storage computer to receive and record jackpot-related information;

code to enable a gaming machine to communicate to the central storage computer that an uninterrupted session has ended; and

code to allow the central storage computer to generate a statement including player-related information and jackpot-related information after an uninterrupted session has ended.

24. A method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted session on a gaming machine in electronic communication with a central computer, even when a reportable jackpot is won, the method comprising the steps of:

collecting player-related information;

storing the player-related information in an electronic medium such that it can be accessed by the central computer;

allowing the player to play substantially uninterrupted on the gaming machine;

sending signals representing jackpot-related information from the gaming machine to an electronic storage device when a reportable jackpot is won;

recording the jackpot-related information in an electronic medium such that it can be accessed by the central computer;

crediting winnings to the gaming machine;

accessing the player-related information and jackpot-related information when the player is done playing; and

generating a statement referencing jackpot-related information and player-related information, the statement being in a form complying with tax regulations.

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25. The method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted session of claim 24 further comprising the step of returning signals from the central computer to the gaming machine after the jackpot-related information has been recorded, the returned signals causing the gaming machine to unlock.

26. The method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted session of claim 24 wherein the allowing step comprises the steps of

- providing the player with a player card encoded with at least one piece of player-related information;

- inserting an agent card into a card reader in communication with the gaming machine;

- entering enabling information into a keypad in communication with the gaming machine;

- removing the agent card from the card reader;

- introducing the player card into the card reader;

- sending enabling information from the gaming machine to the central computer;

- receiving a return signal from the central computer confirming authorization to participate in uninterrupted play; and

- beginning an uninterrupted session on the gaming machine.

27. The method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted session of claim 24 wherein the allowing step comprises the step of providing physical access to a gaming machine dedicated to uninterrupted play.

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28. The method of allowing a player to participate in an uninterrupted session of claim 24 wherein the statement comprises IRS Form W2-G.

29. A method of allowing uninterrupted gaming on a gaming machine, the method comprising:

collecting player-related information adequate to satisfy the reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

storing the player-related information;

allowing the player to participate in an uninterrupted gaming session;

locking-up the gaming machine when a jackpot greater than a threshold amount determined by the taxing authority is won;

sending electronic signals representing jackpot-related information from the gaming machine to a central computer when a jackpot greater than the threshold amount is won, the jackpot-related information being adequate to satisfy the reporting requirements of the taxing authority;

recording the jackpot-related information when electronic signals representing the jackpot-related information are sent from the gaming machine to the central computer;

returning signals from the central computer to the gaming machine when jackpot-related information has been recorded;

automatically unlocking the gaming machine in response to the returned signals; and

generating a statement referencing the recorded jackpot-related information and stored player-related information after the player is done participating.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the collecting step further comprises the step of:

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looking at a document selected from the group consisting of the player's driver's license, the player's social security card, and the player's voter registration card.

31. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of reporting jackpot-related information and player-related information to a taxing authority.

32. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of providing the player with a statement referencing jackpot-related information after the player is done participating.

33. The method of claim 29, wherein the allowing step comprises the step of enabling a pre-programed gaming machine to execute a protocol putting the gaming machine in to uninterrupted mode.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the enabling step comprises the steps of:

- inserting an agent card;
- selecting uninterrupted play from a menu screen on a display; and
- inserting a player card.

35. The method of claim 29 wherein the allowing step comprises the step of providing the player with physical access to a game of chance dedicated to uninterrupted play.

36. An interactive network linking at least one gaming machine and a central control unit for allowing uninterrupted play, the network comprising:

- a central storage unit in electronic communication with the central control unit, the central storage unit having stored player-related information adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

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at least one gaming machine in communication with the central control unit, the at least one gaming machine being arranged to interrupt play only whenever a stop signal is received from the central control unit or an error occurs, the at least one gaming machine sending signals representing jackpot-related information to the central control unit whenever a reportable jackpot is won, and the jackpot-related information being adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

the central control unit automatically returning stop signals to the at least one gaming machine if a write error occurs when jackpot-related information is recorded, the returned stop signals causing the at least one gaming machine to interrupt play; and

a reporting unit in communication with the central control unit, the reporting unit capable of producing statements referencing player-related information and jackpot-related information.

37. The network of claim 36 wherein the central control unit is a computer.

38. The network of claim 36 wherein the player-related information includes a name, an address, and a tax identification number of a player.

39. The network of claim 36 wherein the reporting unit comprises a printer for printing jackpot-related and player-related information in a form required by a taxing authority.

40. The network of claim 36 wherein the at least one gaming machine includes a microprocessor programmed with a protocol for uninterrupted play.

41. The network of claim 40 further comprising a networking computer connected to a plurality of gaming machines and the central control

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unit, the networking computer facilitating electronic communication between the plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit.

42. The network of claim 40 further comprising a player card encoder, wherein each of the at least one gaming machines is in electronic communication with a card reader capable of reading information encoded on a player card.

43. The network of claim 42 wherein the at least one gaming machine is in communication with a keypad.

44. The network of claim 43 wherein the protocol for uninterrupted play is capable of being activated by an enabling event.

45. The network of claim 44 wherein the enabling event includes insertion of an agent card into the card reader, selection of uninterrupted play using the keypad, and insertion of a player card into the card reader.

46. The network of claim 45 wherein the protocol for uninterrupted play is deactivated by removal of the player card from the card reader.

47. The network of claim 40 wherein physical access is limited to the at least one gaming machine.

48. A controller card for a gaming machine comprising a board having
logic for allowing an establishment agent to put the gaming machine into uninterrupted mode;

logic for sending signals indicative of jackpot-related information to a means for storing jackpot-related information whenever a reportable jackpot is won; and

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logic for interrupting play on the gaming machine in response to a stop command.

49. The controller card of claim 48 wherein the board is a component of the gaming machine.

50. The controller card of claim 48 wherein the board is external to the gaming machine.